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Title: Need to review the recommendations of Dr. K. Kasturirangan Report on Western Ghats.

SHRI M.I. SHANAVAS (WAYANAD): The Western Ghats is a mountain range and an important geological landform spread along the west coast of India. The Western Ghats extend over 1500 Kilometers and traverse through six States - Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Kerala. The Ministry of Environment and Forests constituted a Committee headed by Prof. Madhav Gadgil to study about preservation of ecology, environment development and sustaining the ecosystem of the Western Ghats, keeping in view the rich and unique biodiversity. Prof. Madhav Gadgil submitted a report to the Government of India with stringent conditions, affecting lakhs of farmers in the region. It is learnt that all six States objected vehemently to the proposal by Prof. Madhav Gadgil due to its anti-agrarian stance. By taking cognizance of the objections raised, the Ministry of Environment and Forests appointed another Committee headed by Dr Kasturirangan. The report by Dr. Kasturirangan was submitted to the Ministry on the 16th of April, 2013. Kasturirangan report also contains several objectionable and unreasonable recommendations and suggestions which will adversely affect lakhs of people living in the hilly regions of Kerala. If Kasturirangan report is implemented in toto, it will impair the lives of farmers beyond redemption and bring all developmental activities in the region to a complete halt.. With the Kasturirangan report having identified 123 villages as ecologically sensitive areas, it is feared that all developmental works will be stalled and result in eviction of farmers from their land and create a social chaos of unimaginable proportions.

On 14th of November, 2013, a notification was issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests that they are implementing the Kasturirangan report and as a preliminary step, they are banning five items included in the Red Category Industries.

The Red Category Industries include hospitals and dairy farms. Such impractical inclusion of important services and activities is a total injustice to the people.

Hence I would request the Union Government and the ministry of Environment and Forests to consider the following points for most favorable and immediate action :-

(1) To immediately withdraw and cease all and any steps taken to implement the Kasturirangan report.

(2) The Government of Kerala may be given six months' time to gather statements of objections from people of the affected areas and to present the same for consideration to the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

(3) Hospitals and dairy farms must be excluded from Red Category Industries.

(4) The Ministry of Environment and Forests should be directed to issue a clarification on the following points:

(a) That no fanner will be evicted

(b) There will not be any restrictions on sale or transfer of properties

(c) There will be no restrictions further on cutting of trees from their home boundaries

(d) No restrictions on infrastructure development related activities.

(e) As stated by Dr Kasturirangan report itself, the ecologically sensitive area should be only included where the population density is lower than 100 persons/km^2.

I would further request the Union Government to urgently intervene in this matter and take all necessary steps to alleviate the crisis and bring justice to all suffering from the recommendations of the Kasturirangan report.